

STATEMENT OF MARC A. BOURGOIN
LINCOLN CANOE AND KAYAK
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS
H.R. 1808, THE MAINE COASTAL ISLANDS WILDERNESS ACT
JULY 23, 2012

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee today. I am Marc Bourgoin co-owner of Lincoln Canoe and Kayak based in Freeport Maine and I live in the coastal community of Kittery Point, Maine. I am here to support the Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge and H.R. 1808, The Maine Coastal Islands Wilderness Act.

I want to start by thanking Congressman Michaud for reintroducing and Congresswoman Pingree for co-sponsoring H.R. 1808. Maine's citizens are fortunate to have two representatives who understand the value that nature-based tourism plays in our economy and treasure Maine's unmatched natural beauty.

The Maine Coastal Islands Wilderness bill will provide enduring protection for 13 of the Refuge's 56 islands. These rugged islands provide Maine residents and visitors an opportunity to experience solitude and primitive recreation. It is a comfort knowing that this legislation would forever protect the untamed beauty of places I explored as a child and I have camped on, like Cross Island in Washington County.

Maine is blessed with unmatched natural resources. From Mount Katahdin to the Allagash River and the islands that dot our coast, Maine offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities for everyone. Camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, canoeing and kayaking are a few of the pursuits for local residents and visitors to our state.

Many of you are probably familiar with the slogan on Maine's license plate "Vacationland". Wildlife watching and ecotourism brings millions of dollars into Maine's economy annually supporting guides and boats bringing people to these beautiful places, as well as hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and innumerable stores that serve them. Lincoln Canoe and Kayak has a three part business model—manufacture, retail and experiential. We build boats, sell them and provide our customers wilderness paddling experiences. Tourism is our economic engine and access to wildlife and wilderness fuel that engine.

According to the 2012 Annual Report by the Maine Office of Tourism, there were nearly 16 million overnight visitors to Maine last year, an increase of 4.7 percent from 2011. Non-resident direct tourism expenditures for the year was nearly \$5 billion. Aside from seasonal visitors,

protected lands attract entrepreneurs, retirees and second-home residents who bring disposable income and job opportunities and help support local services.

In addition to the wilderness recreation opportunities that businesses like mine depend on, the islands provide critical habitat to many species of wildlife and plants. Our nation's symbol, the bald eagle, nests on many of the islands including Outer Heron and Little Marshall. Outer White and John's Islands are frequented by harbor seals and are birthing and nursing sites for their pups. And then there are the seabirds which are supported by the habitat on many of the islands, such as Old Man Island. Thousands of people come to Maine to see these beautiful seabirds every year.

In addition, Coastal Maine Wilderness would continue to provide shelter for coastal wildlife and act as a living laboratory for important scientific research. It will also serve as a classroom for guide services like mine and for individuals and families in search of a unique outdoor experience while finding the risks, rewards, and self-reliance found only in nature.

There is broad public support for the wilderness protection of these islands. Over 600 Mainers submitted positive comments through emails, phone calls, and written testimony at 4 public hearings when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presented its draft conservation plan for the Refuge including the designation of wilderness for these 13 islands. Over 100 mid-coast organizations, conservation groups, individuals, and businesses, including the Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce and residents and businesses of Washington County are on record in support of the Maine Coastal Islands wilderness.

The Maine Coastal Islands Wilderness Act is a needed step for seabirds, recreationists, the tourism industry, and for our nation. It recognizes the importance of these wild islands and the entire Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge to the people of Maine, our economy, and the countless wildlife and seabirds who depend on this important resource.

I urge the Committee to approve H.R. 1808. Thank you.